

REMINDER:
Barbless hooks and artificial lures only in all inland lakes, streams and creeks.

Fishing at Isle Royale

A Michigan fishing license is required for fishing in Lake Superior, including narrow bays and harbors, and when transporting fish from the island to the mainland. If you are under 17 years of age, you may fish without a license. Licenses are not required to fish on the inland waters of Isle Royale; possession limits are the same as those set by the State of Michigan. Also see additional information on this page regarding special brook trout regulations. Anglers should refer to the Michigan fishing regulations for possession limits and detailed license requirements for Lake Superior (also see the chart on page 7 for a brief guide to regulations). Only 24-hour licenses are available on the island and only when concession services are open. You may purchase a Michigan fishing license online at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Special Brook Trout Regulations

Surveys indicate populations are dangerously low and may be at risk of disappearing unless they have more protection. The National Park Service and Michigan DNR have implemented protective regulations at Isle Royale in order to help with the recovery of this once-common fish. Brook trout can be identified by their nearly square tail and wormlike pattern on the back and dorsal fin. If you’re uncertain about the species you catch, return it to the water.

Lake Superior Waters
(extend 4.5 miles out from the island)
Catch and release only for all brook trout, including all bays and harbors.

Inland Waters
Catch and release only in all lakes, streams, and creeks. Only artificial lures and barbless hooks can be used in all lakes, streams, and creeks.

Invader Alert – Aquatic Invasive Species

Isle Royale waters, like all Lake Superior waters, face a growing threat from the invasion of non-native species. Once species like zebra mussels, spiny water fleas and sea lamprey enter an area, they cause large scale changes in the ecosystem. Two invasive species, the sea lamprey and the spiny water flea have already established a presence in Isle Royale waters. The spiny water flea is presently found only in Lake Superior. The park is concerned it may enter the inland lakes. Once established, its spines harm predator fish and the fleas disrupt the zooplankton population, the basic source for many fish species.

In 2009, zebra mussels were documented for the first time. Their potential to cause catastrophic change cannot be overstated. If zebra mussels were to enter the inland lakes it is estimated that they would cover nearly every habitable surface on an inland lake floor in two to four years. The exotic virus Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) has reached Lake Superior. This disease affects more than 40 species of fish including lake trout and coaster brook trout. The incredible genetic diversity of Isle Royale’s lake trout would be at risk if VHS was introduced to Isle Royale waters.

Stopping the Spread - Visitor Responsibilities

Vessel owners are legally responsible for Aquatic Invasive Species decontamination prior to entering park waters (extending 4.5 miles from Isle Royale and the outer islands). This applies to all vessels (power and sailboats, canoes, kayaks, etc.), regardless of size or configuration. Please take the following steps to prevent the transport of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species to Isle Royale waters:

Inspect for zebra mussels and other aquatic invasives attached to your trim tabs, swim platform, motor mounts, hull and equipment. Feel the hull. A coarse sandpaper texture may indicate larval mussels attached to your boat.

Remove all zebra mussels and other invasive species along with any aquatic plants from your boat, trailer and equipment. Larval mussels are best removed with a scrub brush or similar method. Treat invasives like litter. Dispose of them in a trash can.

Drain all water from your motor, livewell, bilge, transom, etc. away from any body of water.

Wash your boat, including bilge and equipment with either: a) Hot (greater than 104 degrees F) water, b) High pressure water, or c) disinfectant OR

Clean and Dry your boat and equipment in the sun for five days. Rainy days don’t count.

Check to see if your boat is coming from a port known to have zebra mussels. Duluth, Superior, Thunder Bay, Marquette, Ontonagon and Ashland all have documented infestations. If so, take extra measures to assure decontamination.

Fishery Conservation

With its multitude of islands and bays on Lake Superior, as well as numerous lakes and streams on the interior of the island, Isle Royale provides many opportunities for outstanding recreational fishing for wild, native fish. How can you help to conserve and minimize damage to the Isle Royale fishery?

- The possession or use of bait for fishing within the Lake Superior waters of the park is limited to those fish and/or fish parts that are caught within Isle Royale National Park waters. Transporting fish or fish parts for use as bait to the park is prohibited.
- Catch only what you plan to keep or eat. Catch and release, while encouraged, can be damaging and very stressful on fish.
- Know the minimum and maximum legal size of fish so that if they are too small or too large they can be quickly released.
- If moving from Lake Superior to an inland lake, change to a different spool of line. This will help prevent spread of the spiny water-flea, an exotic aquatic invertebrate that competes with juvenile fish for food. It has been found in Lake Superior waters of the park but is not yet documented in inland waters. Spiny water fleas can adhere to fishing line and be easily spread to other bodies of water.
- Release larger fish and keep medium size fish to insure future productivity. Larger, more mature fish produce more offspring than smaller fish.
- Instead of killing trophy fish, consider a modern graphite mount produced from a picture of the fish.
- Return fish to the water as soon as possible. While unhooking them, keep fish in the water as much as possible.
- Try not to handle fish, but if you need to, do so with a wet hand. Release handled fish gently by allowing them to swim

from your hands rather than throwing them back into the water.

- Do not squeeze the fish or place fingers in the gills, since a torn gill can cause the fish to bleed to death.
- Remove the hook gently. Pliers work best. Cut the line near the hook if a fish is deeply hooked. A steel hook will decompose in time.
- Use only artificial lures (required in inland waters) as exotic species can accidentally be introduced by using live bait. In addition, live bait is more likely to be swallowed; resulting in more damage to fish.
- Use single, barbless hooks or bend down the barbs on the hooks. Using larger spoons when fishing for larger fish will help prevent catching undersize fish.

Disposal of Fish Remains

At Rock Harbor, please use the fish cleaning station. At other locations, the preferred method is to dump remains chopped up into pieces 4” or less in deep (50’ or deeper) water. This reduces the unsightly remains and odors around campgrounds and the unnaturally large gathering of gulls at these sites. At inland lakes the preferred method of disposal is to chop fish remains into pieces 4” or less and deposit into deep water via canoe. If you do not have a canoe, you could request the assistance of a canoeist. The alternate method is to chop up remains into pieces 4” or less and move at least 200 feet (75 steps) from campground and throw remains as far as possible into deep water. These steps will eliminate the potential for attracting and feeding wildlife at campgrounds. Please clean fish away from docks and campgrounds. Do not throw remains in shallow water near shore or throw remains to gulls or other animals.

Transporting Fish to the Mainland

You are allowed only one day’s catch in your possession. While the license holder remains on the Island, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) allows those with DNR permits to ship legally-taken fish on the *Ranger III*, *Isle Royale Queen IV*, *Sea Hunter*, *Voyageur II* and the seaplane. This one-a-year permit covers up to a single day’s catch limit. Fish must be claimed when the ferry service arrives at their destination. Permits may be obtained by writing: Department of Natural Resources, 427 U.S. 41 North, Baraga, Michigan 49908-9627 or calling (906) 353-6651. Fishermen returning on the *Ranger III* must check in their fish with the ship’s purser. Fish cannot be transported in coolers on private boats onboard the *Ranger III*.

Fish Consumption Advisory

Contaminants discovered in the Park ecosystem remind us that although Isle Royale is remote, it is part of a global system. Ongoing research in six inland lakes (Sargent, Siskiwit, Eva, Shesheeb, Wagejo, and Anglemorm) shows fish with mercury levels exceeding the State of Michigan fish consumption advisories. For information on fish consumption advisories check with park staff or visit the Michigan Department of Community Health website at: <http://www.michigan.gov/mdch>

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